

Reflections on a Past that is Always Present

Elizabeth Dauphinée
Doctoral Candidate
Department of Political Science
York University

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...All these years spent
Gathering degrees and diplomas
All these years spent
Building the best world
Raising the walls with text
Plastering the cracks
With elocution, erudition, expertise.

All these years spent in certitude
That the next day would unfold
As had the day before
And that what was not well ordered
Could be dismissed, discarded, disavowed.

I dreamed at night of conference presentations
Delivered with a caliber of expertise
That was beyond reproach
I dreamed
Of publication deadlines
On violence and sovereignty
Gender and ethics
The political economy
Of postmodern war.

Here, the opaque stone sinks into my bones
It cracks the enamel on my teeth
It unravels each thread –
Each gossamer thread
That holds the weight of that well-ordered life
Thinner and thinner
That shroud of protection
That shroud built of words
Which are weapons
Turned against me...

I. Concerning Experts on Bosnia

I am building my career on the loss of a man named Stojan Sokolovic (and on the loss of many millions of others, that is to say, Others, who may or may not resemble him). And one night, he told me: “You write about violence – you say that fear is a violence – that the things that cause fear and insecurity are violences. But you do not know how that fear sits like a bear on my heart. You talk about fear, as though you understood what it tasted like – what it smelled like – that electrified, trembling scent of mortar dust and artillery shells. You talk about guilt, but you look in from an angle that does not allow you to see it well. Violence must be quantifiable in your world. It must count bodies, burned houses, livestock, and graves – lost libraries, churches and synagogues, mosques. It must count the flood of refugees driven across the border from their own fields into those of others – into fields that do not want to take them. There is no scale with which to weigh the contents of heart and soul. And so, you can identify ‘victims,’ but you cannot ever really know what violence the committer of violence has done to himself, and you have not bothered to theorize that. No one watches as he sleeps to see if he cries out, or if he weeps, and no one has devised a gauge to look behind his eyes. No one wants to talk to those who hid behind the artillery wearing sneakers because their army did not have proper boots for them. No one wants to ask them if they will ever be alright again, trapped as they are in this life, and hemmed in on all sides by the measure of their own responsibility. You do not see it, because you have never been consumed by fear. If you had heard our wailing – killer and killed alike – you would say something other than what you are saying at your seminars and your conferences. I don’t know what it would be, but I know that it would not be the same.

“We were bankrupt of love, but if all of you there who condemned us here had cared so much about what had happened to the thin fabric of our lives, you would not have come to observe us like tourists on safari. You would not have come to talk to taxi drivers as you drove through the hail of our artillery fire only to go home again and boast about how you survived that, and how exhilarating it was. You would not have snapped so many photographs, looking always for the frame that would ‘shock the conscience of mankind’ – some obscenity – but you would have sold your hefty Nikons on the borders that only you could cross and given us the money to pay the UNPROFOR soldiers who charged five thousand German marks to take our children across the lines and over the borders that we could not cross.¹ You would have held our heads, because we could not stop weeping, even when we were killing, even when we came to be defined by the killing we had done. You would have come to help us bury the dead and say prayers over their souls, because we did not have enough clergy, from any faith, to do it. If

¹ A 1999 Toronto Star article noted that “Canadian peacekeepers were suspected of being paid cash to smuggle refugees across no-man’s land in war-torn Bosnia in 1994, confidential military documents show...No charges were ever laid because no witnesses could be found.” Allan Thompson, “Canadian Troops Smuggled Bosnian Refugees, Memos Say,” *Toronto Star*, 28 November 1999. Lucky for them there were no ‘witnesses’. Really, everyone who has ever set foot in Bosnia knows that the asking price of UNPROFOR soldiers from numerous countries was between DEM 5,000-10,000 per person. Funny, though, how we all self-censor – how we never write it – as though it doesn’t matter.

you had really cared so much, you would not have written about what primitive beasts we were, or how deranged our leaders were (we knew that already) but you would have wept for us. Your rendering of us was a violence of equal measure to the violence we committed. Because even the winners in Bosnia lost, and the bottom line of it is that you got tenure-track positions and literary awards and publications and they were paid for with our loss – with our lives. You determined guilt and innocence with ink lines on the pages of books and journals in your subfield of a subfield of a subfield, and none of it helped anything to be more bearable. You delineated between things that you did not understand – you passed your pronouncements and decrees – you judges and juries – but you did not teach us anything.

“You had nothing to teach from your mountain of learning, even from the beginning – from the first stroke of your pen – from the first tap of your hands across the keyboard. You pretended to understand what we had done – you organized conferences over it – you developed theories about it – but you never really cared what had happened to us, because it was not you. *We* were not you. If you had cared so deeply for us that you wanted to save us, or to have us save ourselves, then you would have wailed and wailed so that the whole world would stop in its tracks. *You had the voice to do it.* But what you wrote about us – what you wrote about who we were – was only a convenient way to elaborate and preserve your imaginative selves – a way to advance your careers. Why write about Bosnia? To prevent it from happening to you, I think. But it cannot happen to you, because you are not barbarians (Stojan Sokolovic smiled here). Do you love me? Don’t answer, because if you did, you would have wailed over us instead of lecturing us on our primitive, barbarian ways from the comfort of your office.”²

Stojan Sokolovic was not angry, and I believe even now that he loved me not despite, but *because* of my treachery. He spoke to me thus out of love.

I was bankrupt of love, and walking one day with my hefty Nikon in the ancestral mountains of eastern Bosnia, in the *opstina*³ of Rogatica, when I saw something that froze the flow of blood in my heart and filled me with terrible regret. The handful of houses on the road closest to the edge of the village were gutted and burned, their terracotta roof tiles smashed and blackened and strewn across the

² I have not dutifully transcribed what Stojan Sokolovic said to me that night while the thunder rolled off the eastern horizon and the soldiers gathered together beneath the balcony to find shelter from the summer rain. I have produced here my *impression* of his statement – the feeling it left me with that I had failed incontrovertibly. Perhaps some scholars would charge my ‘methodology’ as suspect, but I charge anyone who has ever interviewed another human being to dare say that she herself has not served as the sole interpreter of the significance of words captured on tiny little audiocassettes and manipulated them to fit carefully, seamlessly, in to the text she has crafted around the interview – or the text which has itself crafted the interview and the interview’s content. We craft these statements to serve our own purposes – we tease them out in ways that serve us – to underwrite and legitimize our own intellectual projects and projections. I do not pretend to have spoken for Stojan Sokolovic – instead, I have rendered the substance of what I heard in his words, what it meant for my scholarship, and for my ability to be responsible. I have rendered the translation that my own doubt-soaked heart heard in his charge – and so the translation is mine (as all translation invariably is and will ever be), not Stojan Sokolovic’s. Charge me with indecency. I owe my apology to him, and not to anyone else.

³ An *opstina* is roughly equivalent to a county or municipality in North America.

yellow grass. Even now, I regret those burned houses, but I did not forge into the spaces between their twisted walls. There were landmines in the living rooms. One did not need to see the registry to know that they fled (or died) because they felt that Yeshua was not the Christ, but only a prophet of God. What bothered me particularly about it was that, in one of these places, a stove was rusted in the tall grass behind the charred, skeletal structure of the house. It was rusted, and I regret it. I know what a burden it is to prepare a proper meal. Who among us does not? There, that rusting metal thing, which was a stove. There was a woman who once knew intimately all of the details of that stove – a woman who knew when it was too hot, or not hot enough – a woman who knew exactly when to take the *tepsija* out, because she knew the character of that stove, when it would yield, and when it would not.⁴

There it stood, that stove, a strange tumor in the tall grass and sheep walking absently by. Out on the hillside stood a man who seemed to me to be very old. And as I approached him, I was ashamed to not greet him, and so, filled with apprehension (because I was not a master of the language of that place, and because I had been told by the US Secretary of State's travel advisory website that foreignness is a dangerous cloak to wear) I hailed him with raised arm. He disregarded my foreignness, he overlooked it, ignored it (forgave it), and we walked back to the centre of the village together, because by that time I had wandered quite far. I had followed a narrow dirt road on foot from the place where I started to the place where I happened upon him, but he led me back over the mountain along a barely perceptible path. You would have to be a tracker to see that path, I thought to myself. (And are there landmines in these hills?) Was it even a path at all? Or had he led me into spaces unknown? "I don't see the path," I confessed to him. "I know this path during the new moon as well as I know it at daylight," he responded promptly. He had seen me looking at the burned houses, but gave no indication as to whether he thought anything about this one way or the other. I did not bring it up, because there were also potential landmines in the filling of those silences.⁵ After a time, he asked me to whom I belonged *cija si ti?* – *whose are you?* and I told him that I did not know. In truth, I was no one's – at least not in a way that would mean anything to him.⁶ Outside the narrow wooden gate to his house (alas, with the stove inside it and the roof tiles intact!) he implored me to come in out of the sun for a cup of coffee. It was bitter and thick, and he served it from scarred hands in cracked porcelain cups. Had he lit the match that started the fires? Had he laid the landmines in the living rooms? If not in this war, then in the last one? Or would he, perhaps, in the next one? When the coffee was gone, he kissed my cheeks three times, after their fashion, and I ducked through the doorway and continued walking down the road. Even he, the

⁴ A *tepsija* is an all-purpose baking pan.

⁵ Derrida argues that "friendship does not keep silence, it is preserved by silence." (p. 53). See George Collins (trans.) *Politics of Friendship*, Verso (London: 1997).

⁶ The question '*cija si ti?*' translates literally into English as 'whose are you?' or 'to whom do you belong?' In the cultural context, however, the speaker is querying my ancestry – referring to my father, grandfather, my clan or kinship ties, my '*slava*' or family's saint day – all factors that would serve to identify me as *proceeding from* and therefore *tied to* a particular teleological lineage that is presumably bounded and known.

potential lighter of matches, the potential layer of landmines, expressed his capacity for love in the serving of coffee from cracked teacups. And it was truly love, because there was no gain to be had from serving a foreigner in the midst of those mountains – a foreigner who did not even know from whom she had come.

II. On Expertise, Broadly Conceived

What expert am I? This is what Stojan Sokolovic demanded of me and to which I had (and have) no good answer. Perhaps I did not understand the question. I believed at the time of his asking that I occupied a more or less secure place in a discipline that provided a sense of coherence even in its divisions – that its debates and paradigms were part of the metaphysical trajectory of its very existence, and that this could be well-ordered, mapped out, and understood, if subjectively in its content and context, then at least objectively in what we have all agreed upon as its basic ordering frameworks. The questions that I was prepared to answer were finite questions that were inherently formed and based within the context of the discipline: “Where do you stand? What position do you take? To what side do you belong? What tradition, perspective or community do your labours faithfully represent? These are questions that we ask one another from the first moment of our entry into the field [and into the spaces between the fields]. These are the questions, we are given to know from the start, to which we must have our already prepared replies.”⁷

What expert am I? – this was not an inquiry that could be answered within the parameters of that framework, because it did not ask me to identify the ground on which I stood or the window from which I spoke. It did not require me to expound on the history or genesis of my ‘expertise’ – my travels and research, my interviews and contacts in the Southeast of Europe. It charged me with faithlessness *writ large*, with an unforgivable violence, to which I could make no adequate response. It asked me not with which experts I had spoken, or what they had said. It asked me not what scraps of truth were contained on the tiny little audiocassettes that comprised my burgeoning library of interview archives. It asked, instead, if I had noticed the slant of the setting sun on the terracotta tiles on the houses by the coast. It asked me what the future held as read through the dried coffee grounds on the bottom of my espresso cup. It asked me if there was even a possibility of truth – whether anyone could actually apprehend, process, signify, and render it in speech or text or microform. The questions that presupposed the form, if not the content, of acceptable answerability were obliterated in that single sentence, asked rhetorically, perhaps, because there was no possibility of making answer along the lines for which my training had prepared me to make answer. The validity of those questions, in a single flash of well-placed inquiry, was obliterated.

⁷ Richard Ashley, “The Achievements of Post-Structuralism,” in Steve Smith, Ken Booth, and Marysia Zalewski, (eds.), *International Theory: Positivism and Beyond*, p. 241.

What expert am I, asked Stojan Sokolovic, implicitly (perhaps unknowingly) querying the very foundations of the frameworks to which I had heretofore felt supremely confident in. In a moment – in the span of a few seconds, even – the ground beneath your feet shifts just right, just enough, and you are forever lost. At the very least, the canvas of your once living, breathing truth is itself annihilated, collapsed in on itself, swallowed by flame, obliterated by a man who has not spent a moment contemplating the intellectual giants that precede and discipline me (the same intellectual giants who suggested, for example, that Bosnia was rent, and in that rending, was renderable). “You do not have the truth,” his pointed remarks suggested. Problematic enough. But worse than that, “you are not capable of having the truth!” He said this both because and in spite of my ‘positionality’ in the west of the world. This was not the claim of a standpoint theorist – for Stojan Sokolovic was no theorist of International Relations or any other discipline and, significantly, his charge that I did not know what I was talking about did not imply that he himself had a hold of the truth, or knew, even, what *he* was talking about. “If you had heard our wailing – killer and killed alike – you would say something other than what you are saying at your seminars and your conferences. *I don’t know what it would be*, but I know that it would not be the same.” I don’t know what it would be, but I know what it would *not* be, he says.

How can I speak of war or death or peace operations or democratization or privatization or post-conflict environments or the political economy of insecurity in the maze of uncertainty to which Stojan Sokolovic led me? How can I do that, when I have already had to accept the non-existence of an Archimedean point that drags us along a preordained teleology of being (or Being) and progress toward the flower (desire of the grotesque) of objective, universal truth? I can never speak for anything or anyone – any group or community or belief – any thin sliver of hope. All I can do is speak ‘of’ – never ‘for’ – never even for myself, my fragmented, incoherent, half-disciplined self. I can only speak of my impressions, perceptions, sensations, all of which are momentary, fluctuating, contingent, ethereal dust in the recesses of my memory – now vanished in that imperceptible ether of the air in my lungs and the marrow in my bones. I once interviewed a man on the coast of Montenegro, in the walled city of Kotor, as the sun splashed against the blue domes of the churches cut into the mountainside. He did not say anything that I did not already know, it seemed to me, and I never employed that conversation in my written work. I don’t remember what he said now, but I remember the way the sun set unbearably against the flagstones in the square, and I remember the way the cream infused with the cooling coffee in my cup. I remember the feeling of that place – the sense of relief and despair just about everywhere – laughter and good spirits, fear of the future, trouble finding rooms because the place was all packed in with Kosovo refugees and the landlords were bitter because those refugees had to be kept and fed free of charge (“what should I do?” demanded the owner of the guesthouse who had no room to rent. “Should I turn them away?” He shrugged, and waved us on – “find another hotel!”). All this wrapped up beneath the little pink umbrellas that gave poor shade from the midday sun. The bombs had only recently stopped falling, but all up and down the coast that summer, children dashed and screamed and threw

water at one another with their tiny, cupped hands. Women sat clustered together, chatting in small groups, or lying contentedly in the sun. Occasionally, the delighted screaming of children would swell as one of their fathers would suddenly rush up to chase them into the sea a bit. On the end of one pier, a man stood teaching children how to jump while a second man stood chest-deep in the water to catch them. They jumped and jumped, flailing their white arms and legs, shrieking and laughing as they dropped into the water and were immediately rescued by arms which then deposited them back on the pier to do it all over again. It seemed they had forgotten about the bombs. Or had come to the seaside to spite them.

(And while I am on the subject, let me say something about bombs, uncertainty, and the impressions left in darkness and in falling rain at night in fields fundamentally marked by insecurity. I was driving from the south – from Cacak in the south – back to that divided place where the armored vehicles of the occupation were infinitely too wide for the narrow mountain roads. All along the road, now in both places, there were terrible scars in the earth. At the border at Karakaj, between those two republics which not long ago were undefended and inseparable, the soldiers checked and rechecked and checked again my strange blue passport. They were young, and it was dark, and they checked and rechecked and begged me for patience as they checked again. One of them had sneakers on his feet. He asked from where I had come. I told him in my grammarless way (for that is the only way I can engage in a tongue that has seven cases) that I had paused last in Belgrade, where I had a discussion with an old colleague and friend over two brown bottles of beer in Republic Square. The soldier asked if the buildings along Knez Milos had really been so badly destroyed by the bombs. I told him they had, and that it was the same in Nis, Cacak, Kragujevac, and Pancevo. And that, although Belgrade was a showcase of targeted warfare at its technological pinnacle (or at least somewhere in that general vicinity), the same could not be said for other cities and villages, in which cluster bombs had been dropped on marketplaces (Nis) and cruise missiles on homes huddled together for protection against the night (Aleksinac). They took my passport inside and it began to rain. The soldier with the sneakers on his feet asked me what people in my country thought. I answered that they really didn't think anything at all. He smiled at that (I intended him to), and the rain began to fall harder, tapping against the roof of the car. I fished out two cigarettes from a crumpled package and handed one to the soldier through the window of the car. He cradled it carefully in his hand while he rummaged through his numerous pockets in search of a match.

All around, the fields stretched out into an unseen distance, marked in the imagination with bales of hay and distant, clustered collections of houses. Everything was already finished, and nothing could be done then to take it back. The road was more poorly lit than usual because the switching stations and refineries had all been bombed, and there remained a state of some kind of energy emergency as a result of the war. It was more terrible, though, to drive in the darkness, if only because the image produced by one's imagination is usually worse than the reality of things – and this is the case even when one has

already seen what was done. And so, when the sun was yet low in the sky and the earth was scorched in places by deep black craters that had collected evil blackish groundwater in their centres, the sight was somehow bearable. It was bearable because you could talk about it. You could murmur at it, and then hear the terrible tale of the night that it (whatever it had been) was struck by the missiles that were satellite-guided and fired from the safety of a thousand miles away. You could hear them coming, it was said. They made terrible whistling noises in the seconds before the very earth trembled and the concussions rippled through the surrounding houses, imploding all the glass windows for half a kilometer and wrenching the nearest buildings from their very foundations. My security studies mind rattled stupidly: air-to-surface, wing-mounted, laser guided, defended against poorly by what they in this country called *protiv vazdusna odbrana* or simply *PVO* – ‘triple A’ – anti-aircraft artillery – which was useless anyway, because those bombers hid up beyond the clouds at a full 15,000 feet. It was because of this that they made so many mistakes in their target identification and the reason why the gunners could not find them up there.

Yes, it was better to see it in the day, because your mind could order and catalogue the damage. The rational parts of you could engage in intellectual assessment – could grasp the blast radius and the corresponding damage done to structures 20 metres, 40 metres, 100 metres from the point of impact. It was a neat trick, how the intellect was able to master the heart in daylight. But at night, along that road, passing unseen gnarled transformer towers, charred roof tiles, smashed windows, structures bent at crazy angles, bridges broken in half, the intellect could not function. At night, there was no rationality, because without seeing, you cannot order, but you can imagine. And imagining is always worse than seeing, because seeing allows you to find the parameters of something – allows you to delineate things – whereas imagining has no parameters, and never really ends. I waited in the rain at the Karakaj crossing, and I thought these things – things which I thought I would never be able to say, and to which I still may never do justice, because darkness is something Other.

The soldier with the sneakers on his feet smoked my cigarette thoughtfully under the cover of his waterproof overcoat. He gathered himself beneath that coat, squinting his eyes against the rain as they checked and rechecked and checked again my passport. When it was finished, he tossed the cigarette out into the side of the road and said that he would go inside to see why in God’s name it was taking so long. He came back promptly with my passport and regretfully announced that his colleagues had forgotten about me. He wished me a safe and pleasant journey (as though such a thing were possible!), and I gave him another cigarette before I drove on. The stamp in my passport was still wet. It read KAPAKAJ, and the ink had bled into the fibers on the opposite page as well. I didn’t care. The rain had let up a bit, and I was pleased about that, because those roads going up through the mountains were dangerous enough without that they should also be wet...).

I remember how strangely blue were the eyes of the man I was interviewing that day in Montenegro, whose tale I never told – they were almost colourless, with silver flecks in the irises that

expanded and contracted with the tenor of his voice. I could not write that when I got back home, because there was nothing academic in that, and it did not further the potential for knowledge – it did not lay the groundwork for an acceptable research agenda, and the Faculty of Graduate Studies (which stands vigil over me from places now farther, now closer, and to which I am still answerable) would not have liked it at all. Now, I would do anything to gather the guts to remember it better – to gather the guts to say to you clearly that these impressions are the groundwork of the ethics of interaction – the politics of friendship – the imperative to love even what I do not understand and cannot grasp. I don't know if I have those guts, but I do intend to find out. To leave it behind – to theorize it out – to discipline it into a perverse uniformity – to squander the presence, the imminence of that ethical moment, would be unconscionable. "I squander what is given me. I, a squanderer with a thousand hands."⁸

What does this text want to do? What is its goal? Does it have one? Or many? Does it anticipate what may befall it – what may injure it? Is it aware of those who are injured by it? Does it stand on guard, ever watchful for the scornful response that may lie in wait for it around the corner? Will it defend itself against future charges? Will it be able to? Is it aware that it is crushed by the weight of the texts that have come before it, the weight of the texts that demand to know how this text dares to count itself among them, even as it seeks with some semblance of dignity to discipline those texts so that it might say something sane – that is, so that it may find a place to sleep peacefully on the birch shelves in my landmine-free living room that are so painfully illuminated by the afternoon sun? Stojan Sokolovic fundamentally compromised the foundational moment of my faith (or my faithlessness). It is for this reason that the slant of the sun, the grounds in my espresso, or the contracting, expanding, hostage-taking silver flecks in the colourless eyes of my 'informant' are here, in this place, a cause for concern – a cause for concern that I have indeed fallen over the edge of acceptable scholarship. Have I lost my mind? I am just trying to respond to Stojan Sokolovic – to speak of what he asked and to admit, here, in this space, that I was bankrupt of any currency with which to answer the charge.

Have I created a picture of oblivion? Have I created a picture in which all the colours have run together so that each in its own right is unidentifiable? Academic writing is only one kind of writing.⁹ And in this case, it does not allow me to attempt to answer the charge. I cannot enter a plea of 'not guilty,' because Stojan Sokolovic will never sit on the jury that is empowered to decide my fate. Stojan Sokolovic is not my peer in the empire of knowledge, and no court comprised of my itinerant colleagues would convict me for having wronged him. I was only following the rubrics of acceptable scholarship, my lawyer would claim. And the jury would have to believe this, because there would be evidence – oh, reams of evidence! My scholarships, my transcripts, my publications and conference presentations, my

⁸ Thus spoke Zarathustra.

⁹ I am grateful to Sandra Whitworth for making this observation on an earlier articulation of this paper.

fieldwork, my Master's degree, the well-paved road to my doctorate, which no longer has any exit ramps. Who can be convicted for having followed the letter of the law?

The charge of my faithlessness yet remains – spoken in the rain against a smudge of smoke from the tires that burned along the banks of the Vrbas River in homage to St. Peter in the beginning of July. But faithlessness is not a charge that I have experience answering to. I would have walked away from it, would that it had not slipped through the tight weave of my consciousness and prevented me from sleeping well at night.¹⁰ I wanted to walk away, then, to tell myself that it was nothing, nothing – just a mirage, brought on by the burning tires, or a hallucination, brought on by sleeplessness, or the taste of the rain. But I could not escape it. It made demands of me that could not be dismissed, discarded, disavowed. It demanded of me that I admit that I cannot claim to have a formula, to craft a sentence, which will ever have been enough – which will ever have said enough – captured enough – transmitted enough. I can only do what I can do, which is all that I can do and which is all that can be reasonably asked of one being (and especially one who has such small hands). So the task could be to say that impressions are knowledge; that the taste left in the mouth from a half-remembered conversation is knowledge; that my grief and the grief that others have allowed me to see is knowledge; that love and the ability to love is knowledge.¹¹ I could make such a case, because I could draw on resources that have made it before.¹²

But perhaps the better task is to simply abrogate the centrality of knowledge itself (as though I, a student ineffably guided by the viole(n)t shadows of the Enlightenment, could do such a thing!); to say instead that knowledge is a useless, baseless thing, crafted on foundations of faith (or of faithlessness); to say instead that 'knowledge,' and the world of rationality that motivates the tapping of my fingers across the keyboard, is better left to those who want to make a business of knowing; to say that impressions are *not* knowledge; that the taste left in the mouth from a half-remembered conversation is *not* knowledge; that my grief and the grief that others have allowed me to see is *not* knowledge; but that this should not prevent me from writing it, and writing it the best that I can (which may not be at all the same as writing it well!). It may be because these things are not counted as knowledge that we may be in desperate need of them – that we may need to consciously carry them, along with the burden of love, which is not so dissimilar, with us into that oblivion. I have seen (and this is very important) that love – *love* – is still

¹⁰ See Emmanuel Levinas, *Of God Who Comes to Mind* (Stanford University Press: 1998), p. 75.

¹¹ It might also be said that my failure – the failure pointed to by Stojan Sokolovic – can form the baseline for the development of a body of knowledge, properly understood. Iris Murdoch argues that “[w]hat is experienced as most real in our lives is connected with a value which points further on. Our consciousness of failure is a source of knowledge. We are constantly in process of recognising the falseness of our ‘goods,’ and the unimportance of what we deem important.” See *Metaphysics as a Guide to Morals*, Chatto & Windus, Ltd. (London: 1992), p. 430.

¹² For example, Patricia Hill Collins has argued in the context of black feminism(s) that black women's songwriting, poetry, and literature can be utilized as part of a corpus of black women's intellectual history in an effort to reclaim a black women's intellectual tradition. See *Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness, and the Politics of Empowerment*, [2nd edition], (Routledge: 2000).

possible in the post-post-post places we now occupy. I have seen that the hands that laid the landmines were hands that only last year would never let you go or fall beneath the surface of the water; those hands are hard and cracked like pavement, to be sure, but I have seen them kind and yielding and utterly supple with love. How is it that we still carry love with us into that oblivion?

But although I may be faithless, it was Stojan Sokolovic himself (prosecutor from another world) who provided me with the mitigating circumstances that may allow me to escape from the charge if I could see my way clear to ignore the law from now on (and ‘the walls that bound me, descending, bleak and put upon’¹³). I may yet escape with my soul, because he did not say that what I had said was *wrong*. He said that ‘had I been standing elsewhere’ I would have seen something else – which is also not the same thing as saying that what I would have seen from my erstwhile elsewhere position would have been the truth, or complete, either. For even he, who was presumably standing somewhere near that other (that is to say, Other) place did not make any claim to know what I – or even he – would have said. So he did not ask me to say what he thought I should say – what he asked was simply that I stand responsible for not only my words, but also for the position I occupy that allows me to say what I say, and write what I write, in the first place. What he asked for was an ethical re-reading – re-writing – of what I had seen and heard, read, and written.¹⁴ He asked me to suspend the law. He asked me to embody something other (that is to say, something Other) – he asked me to consent to Otherness itself (because I

¹³ Peter Murphy, “Shy,” *Deep* (Beggar’s Banquet: 1989).

¹⁴ Stojan Sokolovic is not the first to ask such a thing. Many feminists have been asking for a similar kind of responsibility for more than a decade. See particularly Donna Haraway, *Simians Cyborgs and Women*, (Routledge: 1991) particularly chapter nine, “Situated Knowledges: The Science Question in Feminism and the Privilege of Partial Perspective.” Haraway argues that “traditionally what can count as knowledge is policed by philosophers codifying cognitive canon law” (p. 183). For Haraway “situated knowledges require that the object of knowledge be pictured as an actor and agent, not a screen or a ground or a resource, never finally as slave to the master that closes off the dialectic in his unique agency and authorship of ‘objective’ knowledge.” (p. 198). Haraway’s point (and Collins’) is that the epistemological and ontological boundaries of what constitutes proper knowledge need to be expanded. The difference here is precisely one of querying ‘knowledge’ as a category and as a bounded phenomenon with particular, definitive characteristics – I would argue here that it is more useful to suggest that knowledge itself should not necessarily be expanded, but rather challenged by other forms of cognition. It is this possibility that I think can get us beyond the epistemological and, by extension ontological, paradigm of inside/outside and other modes of binary thinking. Anthony Burke makes a case for reading poetry ‘outside security,’ arguing that “a certain kind of poetry provides a way of thinking past the dominant ontological assumptions and emotional promises of prevailing political discourses of security... it can help liberate subjectivity from a powerful modern technology of the soul that binds state and subject into an intimate, but ultimately destructive, relation.” (p. 307). What is most instructive here is the idea of thinking *past*, a suggestion that means significantly more than just expanding boundaries – a suggestion, perhaps, that provides a way of collapsing these ontological categories in on themselves, thereby doing away with the very concept of boundaries. This does not, however, solve the first order ontological problem that ‘naming’ entails. Levinas points to the problem of the ‘said’ in the ‘saying’ – the problem, as it were, of naming. This naming is its own ontological technology – a theoretical move that totalizes the named in the moment that the naming takes place. See “Poetry Outside of Security,” *Alternatives* Vol. 25, 2000, pp.307-321; see also Emmanuel Levinas, *Otherwise Than Being Or Beyond Essence*, Duquesne University Press, 1998.

am already Other, even to myself)— he did not ask for authenticity, or for me to go and do and be where, what, and who I am not and cannot be.

Moreover, because I am still concerned with my own defence, or at least with the possibility of making restitution, could I have said something that was purely non-violent? “There is no pure non-violence, only degrees and economies of violence, some of which are more fruitful than others.”¹⁵ Indeed, Caputo is a sly, elusive fox, having carved out for us a dwelling place in the politics of forgiveness – in the politics of a jewgreek place at the table between the rabbis and Dionysus. Levinas is too pious for him. The Infinite stops somewhere – at the foot of my bed, perhaps, or at the bottom of my coffee cup on the coast beside the sea. The Infinite stops at the moment of disaster(s), where undecidability ends and one must come down, either for this or that or for something (or someone) else.¹⁶ And so I am not left speechless – which is fortuitous because I have problems keeping my mouth shut – I am not left with a fundamental inability to say anything at all. It does not mean that I should not speak at all, lest I commit, unawares, (as I already have) violence against those others (that is to say, Others) who would wish me to say something else – something perhaps less violent (or perhaps more so). Stojan Sokolovic does not relegate me into fearful silence – for even silence is a potential form of violence – silence, for example, is complicity – the silence of the body politic that allows the internment and death camps to crop up in train yards, farms, and factories –

[I]n derelict sidings the poppies entwine
with cattle trucks lying in wait for the next time.¹⁷

Silence is also the herald of violence, or its co-conspirator. In silence is violence, to coin a rhyme. I could not have written something non-violent, but I could have written something less violent, keeping in mind and being responsible for the inherent violence that comes to pass in all speech and in all speech acts that make claims about this or that thing, event, or person, to the detriment of other (that is to say, Other) possibilities, which would themselves be violent, but perhaps less so (or perhaps not). And this is the point, made in the shadow of the sun; as a fugitive from the law. We are trapped in violence – discursive and physical, and discursive that leads to physical, and physical that emanates from and leads back to discursive. Accepting that there is no pure non-violence simply requires (as though it were indeed simple) that the writer of violence (that is, myself) keep a vigil of sorts over the ever-present possibility of violence, always trying to minimize its impact – to choose what is less violent – to be aware, as it were, that there are ever only ‘degrees and economies of violence, some of which are more fruitful than others.’ The awareness that there is no pure non-violence is the vocative call – that which

¹⁵ John D. Caputo (ed.), *Deconstruction in a Nutshell: A Conversation with Jacques Derrida*, Fordham University Press (New York: 1997), p. 47.

¹⁶ John D. Caputo, *Against Ethics* (University of Indiana Press: 1993), particularly Chapter 5, “The Epoch of Judgment”.

¹⁷ Roger Waters/Pink Floyd, “Your Possible Pasts,” *The Final Cut* (Phantom Records: 1983).

summons me, after Levinas (who is too pious) – to be responsible for my decisions – for the words I choose and the stances I take. It demands that I stand responsible for and before the unwavering gaze – the inescapable charge – of Stojan Sokolovic. But here is an interesting problem, raised (not of my will, to be sure) in the use of the vocative case. Levinas conceives of the vocative as a salutation – a greeting – because I must greet the Other who faces me – to speak to, but not *for* – which is why the nominative is insufficient (which is, in fact, why the nominative can be seen as its own sort of violence). But the vocative does not only greet, nor does it simply call. The vocative also commands. Perhaps the illeity – the inability of the Self and the Other to switch places on equal terms – mitigates this.¹⁸ Stojan Sokolovic and I cannot change places. I can accept that. But how shall I call *Stojane!* without that I also *require* him to turn back to face me, even if and when he wants to have done with me? That which greets in the vocative case can also command. *Stojane!* And he replies: *evo me!*¹⁹ Stojan Sokolovic is Other – *drugi* – who requests a politics of friends – *drugovi*. My Other friend – *moj drugi drug*. My Other friends – *moji drugi drugovi*. And what if I call out in the vocative case using a different character set? What if I call out Стојане! If I call out Стојан Соколовићу! What if I call for a politics of friends – другови? And if I speak of my Other friend – мој други друг? My Other friends – моји други другови? If I call out Стојане! must he reply as he did above? ево ме! Changing the letters does not change the meaning of the words, but it might change their politics, might it not? Yes, indeed. And is it an accident that, in Stojan Sokolovic’s tongue, the word for ‘friend’ (*drug*/друг) is so similar to the word for Other (*drugi*/други)? I am not a linguist of Slavic tongues (though I like their phonologies), but this is an interesting question.

Speaking of questions, here is one fraught with trouble – trouble on the horizon, gathering like storm clouds: the Other is always the widow, the orphan, the stranger.²⁰ Even Caputo, who charges Levinas with too much piety, accepts this. He accepts it quite unproblematically. But how do we adjudicate? How do we judge? Those that do the killing are the powerful (and so worthy of judgment); and those that do the dying are the widows, orphans, and strangers – the disasters. But we have entered into the realm of proper names: the proper name of Stojan Sokolovic, who may himself not quite have been a disaster (I’m not sure about this), but who certainly heralded one. Are all of the soldiers agents, and all of the victims voiceless? This is a problem whose resolution evades me. It is easy to charge states and militaries, and even particular individuals with unbearable acts of oppression and violence. We do it quite regularly, and I am the champion of much of this myself. But Caputo, via Derrida, brings me to the level of proper names, and from this place, how can we judge? The law should be suspended,

¹⁸ See Emmanuel Levinas, *Otherwise Than Being* (Duquesne University Press: 1998).

¹⁹ “*Me voici!*”

²⁰ Levinas, *Otherwise Than Being*, op. cit.

so that justice can be done.²¹ And deconstruction itself *is* justice – it does not just announce justice – it does not simply point to the possibility of justice. Deconstruction *is* justice, but that does not absolve it of violence.²² The claims of others – claims against dominant narratives – point to an ethics of encounter, but this is not devoid of violence.²³

Here is the other part of the charge that was filed against me by Stojan Sokolovic: “Your rendering of us was a violence of equal measure to the violence we committed.” I am speechless before this particular charge. I do not know how to respond; I do not know how my words make me as guilty as the ones who hid behind the artillery wearing sneakers, because their army did not have proper boots for them (as though this particular detail matters). This is a charge that frightens and outrages me, because it puts *me* behind the artillery. It makes me complicit in the firing of mortar rounds, in the laying of landmines in living rooms and riverbanks. It makes me complicit in disaster upon disaster upon disaster. How can this be? I have an alibi. I was in New Jersey.

III. The Safety of Distance Betrayed, In Real Time

I was in New Jersey – abode of the guiltless, sanctuary of the ethical, altar of equity. Indeed! I am the child of an empire of wisdom – of an empire of representation – an empire of wealth, and of conquest, of plenty. And the pavement of this empire is overgrown in the cracks between the concrete slabs with grasses and weeds that give testament to the possibility of resilience – to the possibility of resistance. Gathering in the shaded alleys between crumbling buildings sleep black-skinned people with black eyes whose resistance has been attested to by their development of a tongue that the police understand only partially. I passed through the sprawling coastal towns of that place every day of my life for many countless years, wholly uninterested in what measure of responsibility belonged to me – wholly uninterested in the conditions that forced people to drag their mattresses out of their broiling apartments in summer to sleep on the fire escapes – the closest you can get to cool when you have no fan and no air conditioner, and no resources with which to obtain a fan or an air conditioner. In the eyes that look out from the empire, the whole world appears oppositional. And the empire’s Other is made to lay still (even as it yet moves – yet breathes – yet resists). And, somehow, the specificity of existence is lost in the neat, scholarly numbering of worlds. It occurs to me now, though, that even within worlds are other worlds – juxtapositional worlds that spread out across space and time along the coast running south from the place I was born. Worlds of rich and poor and middle class, white and brown and black, dead and

²¹ Caputo, *Against Ethics*, particularly Chapter 4, “In the Names of Justice.”

²² See Caputo, *Against Ethics*, p. 87.

²³ Michael Shapiro points out that an important dimension of an ‘ethics of encounter’ involves providing a space for those who do not fit into the geopolitical or other dominant, legitimacy-bequeathing narratives to stake out an effective claim to recognition. See Michael J. Shapiro, “The Ethics of Encounter,” in David Campbell and Michael J. Shapiro (eds.) *Moral Spaces*, (University of Minnesota Press: 1999), p. 60. But what do we do when those claims are themselves implicated in violence?

dying, and living; worlds that do not transcend or recognize one another; worlds that are separated by unseen municipal-cum-social boundaries that define and delineate the terms of one's life. There was a traffic light. Somewhere, an artillery shell was bursting over the folded fields of Bosnia, but I did not really notice this, because I was stuck at the traffic light, filled with exasperation at the thirty-second delay. The place where that traffic light stood was a miserable, heat-gathering place, overgrown with grasses and garbage. Houses which once were newly built and freshly painted stood now tired, sagged, and drunken as their cheap, state-funded foundations began to collapse beneath them. So there on that day at the traffic light, when I was impatient to go and the sun slanted down in the late afternoon of a steaming July day, I caught sight of a child standing amid the grasses that sprouted from the cracked asphalt just off the side of the road. He was standing stock still with his arm crooked back and his hand resting on the small of his back. He had blue shorts – cheap ones – from one of the numerous discount shopping markets that sported clothes I would rather have been dead than caught wearing. He was staring through the windscreen at me. He had black liquid eyes set deep in his black face and those eyes penetrated me, seared through me, shocked me out of my impatience and constricted the heart that slept safely behind my ribs. In those seconds before the light changed (hurry up, light!), we stared at one another we two, from our two oppositional worlds with their intimate threads of connection and dependence. As he held my eyes with his own, it seemed to me that I was condemned in totality for the fact that in the next ten seconds I would pass through that light forever, leaving him to stand on that unyielding pavement for as long as he would (which is a length of time I cannot attest to). It was the measure of his suffering (the degree and the caliber of which I will never know) that made my life possible – that made my impatience possible – that made the destination that I was impatient to get to possible. It was his suffering that supported my own lack of suffering, and for which I was wholly and totally and undeniably responsible. In those last seconds before I would never see him again, I saw more in this wordless, momentary clarity than I had ever gleaned from any text later read or conversation held again in my life. He showed me (whether he meant to or not) that within some worlds there are others, and that in order for some worlds to exist as well as they do, others crouch on the verge of obliteration. For it is the obliterated ones that support all of us here, lounging in the luxury of impatience (lounging in the luxury of writing for profit!). Even had I asked him for forgiveness, even had I asked him to forget the possibility (the certainty!) of my crime, he should not have dropped the charge. And now I know that this is as it should be.²⁴

²⁴ This moment is only what it claims to be: a moment. Nothing more. I am aware of the impression left that my narrative has potentially robbed this child of agency. I do not know what became of him. I do not pretend to. But I believe that there is agency in his ability to level the charge that I was faced with, whether or not he intended it as such. I cannot discern his intentions, as I could not discern the intentions of Stojan Sokolovic. All I can do is provide the impression it left on me – which I will accept is as baseless as knowledge itself.

He would not have dropped the charge. And now I would not ask him to. Stojan Sokolovic – *Stojan Sokolovicu!* – in the vocative case – I am still engaged here in a political economy of violence. Стојан Соколовићу! There is no way out of this. There is violence, even, in representation – even in this representation. The memory of that child, who bore a proper name, is what attenuated me to the fact of my own responsibility. I do not have the strength to resist that gaze. It follows me still, plague of my own conscience. But even now, that child resists my rendering of him – he resists my representation of him. I cannot represent him – I cannot dare to speak for him. But I can speak *of* him – I can speak of the impression he left upon me – because impressions are not truths or truth claims – I can speak of my awareness of the violence that lies at the heart of my own good life – how that excludes – and how it injures. I can speak of the violence I committed against him, even without my immediate awareness, because in the exigencies of the late capitalist condition, someone must pay for the luxury of my impatience. And that someone is (almost) always marked by race or colour or gender, and who is first on the unemployment line (yes, indeed, the last shall be first, but here in ways that Yeshua – whether prophet or Christ – surely never intended!). So we can engage at the level of proper names. The principle of proper names requires us to suspend the law – the Law – (which is also the law that frames the language of my discipline) and a suspension of the law is the beginning of the possibility of justice. At the level of proper names, my rendering of Stojan Sokolovic was a rendering as violent as the violence that had been committed. Because even as the artillery shells were raining down from the hilltops in Bosnia, I was responsible for my own measure of complicity in disaster. How, now, shall I separate myself from the layers of landmines, from the destroyers of worlds?

Have I gone too far? We academics – we products of those viole(n)t shadows receding into centuries that themselves precede and define us; we defend and console ourselves with the thin blade of rationality that wards off our enemies, arguing in conferences that ours is the best way to write, the best way to see, the only way to know. The academy creates knowledge (I know this because I am one of its keepers – a keeper of knowledge), it covets knowledge (and thereby covets what it creates, which must be the symptom of some illness or other); and all this creating and coveting serves to discern the parameters of the possible. Even in this post-post-post place we occupy – even in this oblivion – we are still caught in the straitjacket of our theism.²⁵ Can we journey beyond the parameters of the possible? Will we even retain a claim on the ability to speak to the discipline – to speak *from* it? Who cares, now?

²⁵ I use the term ‘theism’ here to refer to the Enlightenment trinity of rationality, science, and knowledge. These *replaced* the triadic theism of Christianity, but they did not disrupt the universal absolutes that theism entailed. Thus, the legacy of the Enlightenment remains an insular, unassailable species of theology, with science standing in for God. William Connelly notes that “[c]ontemporary social theory contains within it a set of secular reassurances that compensate for those lost through the death of God... (p. 16) [T]his phenomenology presupposes a relatively stable and serene context of self-identity, social practice, state and interstate relations, and temporal projection.” (p. 19). Human freedom, of course, is the chief compensation. See *Identity/Difference: Democratic Negotiations of Political Paradox*, (University of Minnesota Press: 1991).

My ability to speak is partial and situated, and my words, my speech, my acts – the deeds done or left undone by my small hand, can never claim what cannot be said of them. I regret that we Enlightenment sojourners and mourners have identified what is not knowledge (though I confess, I have a hard time seeing my way out of that). And though knowledge as a category, and what counts as knowledge, may be in flux and the boundaries may move around from time to time, the walls as such seem ever to remain.

My pride in the caliber of my intellect has led me to believe that it is better to be the one who holds the stick than the one who gets hit with it – that it is better to be right than to be wrong, to humiliate than to be humiliated – that it is better to have a defensible truth, even if I know in my heart that my truth is nothing more than something that crossed my mind as I wandered around in the ancestral mountains of eastern Bosnia – even if I know that my truth is nothing more than the itinerant fragments I managed to capture on my tiny little audiocassettes. I cannot separate myself now, from the layers of landmines, from the ones who hide behind the artillery. And I do not know if Caputo would count himself among us: the guilty who are surely still worthy of forgiveness, and of love. Now, I look elsewhere for ethics.

But grief is not a thing that can be washed from the skin like salt.

IV. Responsibility

Stojan Sokolovic has attenuated me to the fact that I am responsible, to everyone, all the time, and for everything (I borrowed this from Levinas, who borrowed it from Dostoevsky). This is the moment when the possibility of possibility comes crashing in: when you laugh and weep and mourn all at the same time, and with the same breath of air in your lungs. But this responsibility is also a thing that I fear and despise because it is inexplicable, beyond all description or rendering of it. It is the boundless possibility that I have theorized myself out of – that I have trained myself to ignore – in the same way that when I lived close to the sea in the empire, I eventually did not hear it crashing against the shore anymore. I have recently noticed that I can stand in the middle of something for a thousand years and still fail to see its most salient points – and still fail to see what it really is. What expert am I, because I saw the mountains burning and the stove in the grass behind the house that had landmines in its gutted living room? What expert am I for falling supine beneath the charge of Stojan Sokolovic, who disappeared into the folds between borders that only moments ago were undefended, interrepublican borders, rent in ways that defied the intention of their crafters? Stojan Sokolovic knew that there was no way to ever go home again – not because there were landmines in his living room, but because he proceeded now from what had ceased to exist.²⁶ I loved him because he charged me with faithlessness and lovelessness *writ large* –

²⁶ In this formulation, what has ceased to exist is the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, but this does not make Stojan Sokolovic a refugee. Stojan Sokolovic was not a refugee – he was not properly stateless and he was not forcibly displaced. He was in a place stranger still: he possessed a passport issued by the SFRY (it was a nice burgundy colour), even though there was, in fact, no SFRY to issue such a document. This did not make him a

because he enabled me to write what I am writing now (which is my attempt to beg that particular court for mercy, but which is also an attempt to say something worth saying in a language that allows me to), no matter how strange or even pointless it may ultimately be. He loved me because of my treachery, like he loved even the ones with proper names who hid behind the artillery in sneakers because their army did not have proper boots for them. He loved them even though they had killed others, who also bore proper names, that he had loved equally well. Now, who am I (who are you) to map out and order that love? Who am I to deny that one can love the ones who did the killing despite one's love for the ones who were killed? Stojan Sokolovic did not order his love on the basis of guilt and innocence. He loved because he loved.

This is a spectacular kind of love! This is an indiscriminate, wasteful love that recognizes the most radical of all ideas – that the world unfolds every day – that in every day, and in every moment, and in every second, the beginning of the unfolding of the world takes place, without coherence, without systematization. This is a love that is not bankrupt of justice (as so many systems of justice are bankrupt of love). It is a love that contemplates the possibility of forgiveness.²⁷ It is the willingness to admit that the one who sits across the table facing me over a cup of espresso on the coast beside the sea is indiscernible, ethereal, gossamer-thin, inapprehensible, subject to change – subject *of* change.

It is the sudden, inescapable awareness that I am obligated to what is across the table from me regardless and in spite of its possible qualities – even if and when what is across the table from me is actually a mirror that reflects back at me the Other that sleeps beneath the surface of my own fragmented Self. Yes, even the Self is a non-existent entity, made falsely unitary by the destruction of that which

proper citizen of any state (since the issuing state had ceased to exist), but it was the only travel document that could be issued by Belgrade that had any legitimacy with the international community. In fact, the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia began issuing a new passport – one that reflected the membership of only Serbia and Montenegro in the re-constituted federation – to women, children, and men who had performed their compulsory military service. Those who had not fulfilled their military service obligations were ineligible to receive the new blue passport, which was exceedingly strange, because the international community did not recognize the validity of this new blue passport and it was therefore virtually useless for travel. Visas to visit other states were issued only if the bearer of the new blue passport also had permanent resident status in a second country. So, for example, the United States consulate in Toronto issued US tourist visas to blue-passport-holding Yugoslav citizens only if they were also in possession of Canadian- or third-party issued landed immigrant documents. US visas were not embossed in the bearer's passport, but were provided on separate pieces of paper, because the United States did not recognize the federation that had issued the passport. US visas were, however, embossed in the old red passports of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, an entity comprised of six constituent republics, even after the US had recognized three of those republics as independent states. So what had ceased to exist was the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, but what followed, the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia comprised of Serbia and Montenegro, had yet to exist. This was the strange placelessness of a people who now occupied a space that had become spaceless. But this is only the diplomatic, interstate surface of what had ceased to exist. What had also ceased to exist was a particular mode of identity – a form of self-consciousness – an ability to place oneself in a space and place. The temporality – the familiar linearity of 'placing' was fundamentally blown apart.

²⁷ Caputo argues that "[f]orgiving lets the web of human relations hang loose. It cuts the event loose, gives the Other space, room to breathe, to try again." See *Against Ethics*, p. 112

would disrupt its coherence. My coherence was so profoundly disrupted after all this that I could not discipline it. Its margins became its center – and its center the margins. The floorboards were lifted, the walls were blown out, the corridors were flooded, and all that remained recognizable beneath the surface of that interior water was laughing and weeping and mourning, simultaneously. The fundamental incoherence of my Self was there all along, you know. It's just that I didn't see it until my faculties had all failed me. I didn't see it until I was smacked with the awareness that there is love inside hatred and happiness in horror. I didn't see it until I saw that fevers are the hallmark of health – that luck and fortune are encased in sorrow – that disgrace and ineptitude and failure are ingrained in all knowledge systems – that love is not singular or unitary but that it cannot be ignored forever because it will torment your dreams at night – that incoherence is not lunacy – that my inability to explain and understand is not the mark of my foolishness, but is the very basic form of my existence.

If I had been willing to see back when I was writing the things that Stojan Sokolovic called me to account for that I did not (could not) occupy a coherent place in the observatory of innocence, I would not have (could not have) written what I, in fact, wrote. I would have seen that I was, in fact, Other to my Self. I would have seen that this Otherness is love itself – the possibility of love – the violence of love that takes you hostage – that demands coexistence with, and often betrays, the intellectual, the rational, the scientific, the knowable. Life is bound in love. And it is precisely the love in life that offers the heaviest burdens. Stojan Sokolovic was not burdened by his love of the innocent (who is burdened by love of innocence?). The burden lay in the love of the guilty, in the love *for* the guilty (which does not, however, entail ignoring the call for justice). And this, I see now, has bound me in measure beyond measurement, because of my love and because of my lack of it. I am bound with unseen chains – obligated in ways incomprehensible. I am responsible to answer for myself in all things, with no provisional sunset clause. In this, there is no retreat.

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